

The Purposes of Nuclear Arms Control: Achievements and Failures

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Course description

For more than a decade, nuclear arms control is in a crisis that saw the stagnation and even collapse of important arms control processes. At the same time, Russia's war against Ukraine demonstrates that cooperative arms control regimes cannot stop determined aggressors. Against this background, the block course addresses the questions which objectives states can pursue through nuclear arms control, which purpose can nuclear arms control serve in an era of strategic rivalry, and which hopes connected to arms control have been disappointed in the past.

Learning objectives

The course provides students with a differentiated understanding of the goals and possibilities of nuclear arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament from various theoretical perspectives. In addition, they will become more familiar with selected nuclear arms control regimes on the basis of case studies and will be able to critically assess arguments in the political debate surrounding these regimes.

Didactic concept

Based on introductory literature, course participants decide on a specific nuclear arms control, disarmament or non-proliferation regime, which they will study in more detail in preparation for the course. The course begins with a lecture on definitions, motivations, concepts and types of regimes of arms control. A particular focus will be on the ongoing crisis in arms control and possible ways out. The course will then focus on selected regimes in further detail. For each of the regimes, two participants engage in a brief, structured debate in which they try to convince their audience that the respective regime is either a success or a failure.

Mandatory general reading

Kühn, U. (2023). Rüstungskontrolle in den internationalen Beziehungen [Arms control in international relations]. In *Einführung in die Internationale Politik: Studienbuch*, edited by Michael Staack, 537–564. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110722529-017>.

Maurer, J. D. (2018). The Purposes of Arms Control. *Texas National Security Review*, 2(1), 9–27.
<https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/870>.

In preparation for the debates, please read at least the text assigned to your position. You may also find the text of the opposite position helpful to anticipate their line of argumentation.

1) The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT; 1968)

Success position:

Harries, M. (2021). Response: Keep the NPT. *Survival*, 63(4), 125–130.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2021.1956198>

Failure position:

Pretorius, J., & Sauer, T. (2021). Ditch the NPT. *Survival*, 63(4), 103–124.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2021.1956197>

2) The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW; 2017)

Success position:

Müller, H., & Wunderlich, C. (2020). Nuclear Disarmament without the Nuclear-Weapon States: The Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty. *Daedalus*, 149(2), 171–189.
<https://doi.org/10.1162/daed a 01796>

Failure position:

Roberts, B. (2018). Ban the Bomb? Or Bomb the Ban? Next Steps on the Ban Treaty (Global Security Policy Brief). European Leadership Network.
<https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/180322-Brad-Roberts-Ban-Treaty.pdf>

3) The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Interim Agreement and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (SALT/ABM; 1972)

Success and failure position:

Jervis, R. (2022). The Many Faces of SALT. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 24(4), 198–214.
<https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws a 01105>

Further reading:

Maurer, J. D. (2019). Divided Counsels: Competing Approaches to SALT, 1969–1970*. *Diplomatic History*, 43(2), 353–377. <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhy069>

4) The Hotline Agreement (1963)

Success position:

Simon, E., & Simon, A. (2020). Trusting Through the Moscow-Washington Hotline: A Role Theoretical Explanation of the Hotline's Contribution to Crisis Stability. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5(4), 658–674. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogz062>

Failure position:

Pelopidas, B., & Egeland, K. (2024). The false promise of nuclear risk reduction. *International Affairs*, 100(1), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iad290>

5) The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT; 1996)

Success position:

Kimball, D. G. (2016). The enduring nonproliferation value of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. *The Nonproliferation Review*, 23(3–4), 397–408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2016.1256539>

Failure position:

Mian, Z. (2016). A step toward what? Nuclear weapons, the test ban, and a world without nuclear testing. *The Nonproliferation Review*, 23(3–4), 301–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2016.1263487>

6) The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA; 2015)

Success position:

Fitzpatrick, M. (2017). Assessing the JCPOA. *Adelphi Series*, 57(466–467), 19–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19445571.2017.1555914>

Failure position:

Kroenig, M. (2018). The Return to the Pressure Track: The Trump Administration and the Iran Nuclear Deal. *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 29(1), 94–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2017.1420529>